

Maharlika

PINOY LIFE IN THE MARIANAS

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All Praise

Philippine Department of Public Works Secretary Hermogenes E. Ebdane Jr. was all praises with the beauty of Saipan, particularly the beaches.

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Tough Cookie

Jennifer Aniston is one tough cookie. The first time we met her a few years ago, Jen was still married to Brad Pitt and very much in love.

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MELVIN MALVAR

2005 Bagong Bayani awardee

By MARK RABAGO
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Growing up in the sleepy town of Mati, Davao Oriental in the Philippines, Melvin Malvar was instilled with a solid work ethic by his schoolteacher parents at an early age.

Coupled with an almost insatiable thirst for knowledge and driven to excel, it came as no surprise years later that the Construction and Material Supply Inc. general manager was hailed as a 2005 Bagong Bayani awardee.

Born on June 15, 1955 to parents Esteban and Corazon, Malvar was a valedictorian at Bobon Elementary School and Mati National Compre-

hensive before earning a degree in Business Administration-Accounting at the University of the East, where he graduated with honors.

Graduating in the Top 10 percent of his class and fresh from passing the Certified Public Accountants licensing exam, Malvar was heavily courted by leading accounting companies in

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'Not expecting to win award'

By MARK RABAGO
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Although he is proud to be named one of the Bagong Bayani awardees in 2005, Melvin Malvar said he really wasn't expecting to win and in fact was actually quite hesitant in joining the prestigious competition.

"At first, I had no intention of joining but because of the prodding of organizations that nominated me, I reluctantly joined the search," he said. "It was actually a last-minute submission on my part. Six from Saipan were nominated and luckily I won."

The general manager of Construction and Material Supply Inc. said he was overwhelmed by his selection and said he is dedicating the award to his family, who has always stood by his side all these years.

Before leaving the Philippines shortly after the awarding ceremony held at the Malacanang Palace, he gave his 2005 Bagong Bayani trophy and gold medal to his parents, who in turn promised him they would put the trophy—along with his other awards from his elementary, high school, and college days—in a special trophy case.

Despite his latest achievement and the success that has followed him throughout his career in the Philippines and on Saipan, which included being named one of the 10 Outstanding Overseas Filipino Workers in the CNMI in 2003, Malvar remains grounded and said he is quite humbled by the whole experience.

"The screening group probably saw that my career achievements, contributions to the company, and my volunteer work were good enough for me to be chosen among the 2005 Bagong Bayani awardees," he said.

Aside from his successful career on Saipan, which includes being one of the first nonresident Filipino workers on Saipan to reach the level of general manager (See related story), Malvar has also endeared himself to the local Filipino community with his work outside of his responsibilities at CMS.

Through his membership in the Marianas Institute of Filipino CPAs and Accountants—where he held the position of vice president-external for two consecutive years—Malvar was instrumental in the organization's holding of U.S. CPA exam review courses, seminars for preparing tax filings, and computer lessons.

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Melvin Malvar receives his 2005 Bagong Bayani award from Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last Dec. 2 at Malacanang Palace. Looking on is Bagong Bayani Foundation, Inc. president Capt. Gregorio S. Oca.

PINOYNEWS

CNMI tops contributions to 'Tuloy Aral Program'

Contributions from the CNMI topped the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration's "Tuloy Aral Program" last year.

According to CNMI Welfare officer Mary Dait last Friday, Filipino workers and their families on Saipan sponsored the most number of indigent students in the Philippines, compared with other Filipino

workers in other parts of the world in 2005.

Dait said that Filipino workers on Saipan sponsored 31 students.

The "Tuloy Aral Program" helps children from poor families in the Philippines by sending them to elementary or high school.

"I am proud of the Filipino workers on Saipan for their generosity. As of Dec. 31, 2005,

Saipan Filipino workers sponsored the highest number of scholars, followed by those in Japan," said Dait.

Dait said workers in Japan sponsored between 28 and 29 students in 2005, while workers in Riyadh sponsored five.

The success of the "Tuloy Aral Program" was highlighted during OWWA's graduation and award ceremonies held last Saturday night at

Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan in Garapan.

The "Tuloy Aral Program" allows a sponsor to donate at least \$100 (about Php 5,300) to the program that will cover the recipient-student's tuition and expenses for books and other school supplies for a year.

OWWA has partnered with the Philippine Overseas Labor Office and the Department of Social Welfare and

Development to implement the program.

Saipan-based sponsors of the "Tuloy Aral Program" were Labor Rep. Joan Lourdes Lavilla, the Marianas Filipino Women Association, KAMPIL, Vismin-da, University of the Philippines Alumni Association CNMI Chapter, Bayani Association, U.S. Office of Insular Affairs Saipan field representative Jeff Schorr and wife Hannah, and

Mary Lou Madrazo.

Other sponsor were Nelida Atalig, Dolores Mabuti, Veminda Castro, Gabriel de Guzman, Ladyvir Canape, Socorro Borja, Tan Holdings Employees Association, United Filipino Organization, Movers, Roland and Ruby Pamintuan, Renato Abarquez, Florenda Miranda, Ignacio Banadera, and the Alliance of Filipino Organizations. *(Marconi Calindas)*



Welfare Officer Mary Dait reads the congratulatory message of OWWA central office administrator Marianito D. Roque.

OWWA official heaps praise on Saipan OFWs

A ranking official of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration expressed his admiration for the overseas Filipino workers on Saipan for making the effort to enhance their skills by recently learning the culinary arts.

In a letter read by Welfare Officer Mary Dait, OWWA central office administrator Marianito D. Roque extended his congratulations to some 85 Filipino nonresident workers in the CNMI who recently finished their Culinary and Food Processing training course sponsored by OWWA.

"I am really happy that our overseas Filipino workers on Saipan took it upon themselves to continue learning and acquiring skills and values that

would empower them and make their gradual reintegration to the mainstream of Filipino society more successful," Roque said.

The OWWA administrator also reiterated a number of "horror" stories of returning OFWs who experienced difficulties when they finally decided to come back home for good to the Philippines. Instead of coming home to a "hero's welcome" after enduring loneliness and hard work abroad, he said they come home with no clear prospect of how to start their life anew.

He said the 85 Filipinos who finished the culinary arts course chose to prepare for their future.

Roque said such projects help in

identifying the training and retooling of those who choose to embark in a new project or business, and OWWA has been instrumental in this endeavor.

"OWWA has embarked in a lot of projects to make our modern day heroes make a mark on the Filipino nation," he said.

Roque added that his office has been forging partnerships with different private sector groups and non-government organizations in coming up with schemes to help OFWs overcome their difficulties and anxieties, at the same time sharpen their acquired skills and knowledge for them to be future entrepreneurs and movers of the Philippine economy. *(Marconi Calindas)*

2005

FROM PAGE 1

Manila. He eventually chose SyCip, Gorres, Velayo & Co., where he rose from junior auditor to senior staff assistant from 1976-1981.

He moved to Philippine National Construction Co., at the time the largest construction firm in Southeast Asia, in 1982 and served as assistant manager/audit specialist for three years before deciding to try his luck overseas in 1985.

Malvar said it was through his former supervisor at SGV, Malou Supnet, that he was able to seek greener pastures abroad when she recruited him as chief accountant of CMS in 1985.

At CMS, Malvar showed his knack for organization and innovation by streamlining the company's accounting department as well as setting up CMS' management information system.

His first stint at CMS ended in 1991 when he decided to move to the U.S. mainland to pursue further studies and advance his career. He worked as a quality assurance assistant at Diamond Walnut Growers, Inc. and also as a licensed tax preparer in Stockton City.

But as fate would have it, Malvar was forced to abandon his American dream in 1994 when his parents became ill—his father went blind and his mother developed a spinal cord ailment.

Being the eldest of two siblings, Malvar had no choice

but to care for his parents in Tagum City, Davao del Norte. His homecoming, however, still had a silver lining, as not even a week had gone by when he was offered a comptroller-ship position at the Tagum Rural Bank. He found self-fulfillment in his new job at the rural bank because he was learning a lot of new things and was given new challenges, among them spearheading the bank's expansion. Along the way, he managed to earn a master's degree in Business Administration from the University of Mindanao in 1998.

Malvar became such a vital cog of bank owner Reynaldo Reyes that he was given another title, that of compliance officer in charge of the bank's branching requirements as mandated by the Central Bank of the Philippines. When he left Tagum Rural Bank in 2000, it already had grown into an eight-branch operation.

His second "tour of duty" on Saipan started in early 2000, when Malvar's old boss, CMS president Dennis Yoshimoto, gave him a call and told him he badly needed him and was offered the comptrollership of the company.

With his parents feeling much better and well adjusted and this opportunity to help his old boss and company, Malvar once again packed his bags and relocated to Saipan.

When he arrived, he was tasked to "right the ship" of the floundering company. He

immediately tried to remedy the situation by improving cash flow and recouping the company's mammoth receivables.

In 2001, he was appointed general manager of CMS, one of the first nonresident Filipino workers to reach that position on Saipan, and after five or so years nursing the company back to the pink of health, Malvar has become an indispensable employee of the company and Yoshimoto and the CMS' board of directors couldn't be happier with his performance.

Malvar now oversees the day-to-day operations of CMS. His responsibilities include overseeing CMS' quarry operations on Saipan and Rota, a quarry manufacturing division, heavy equipment rental and maintenance business, Benjamin Moore Paints (CMS is the exclusive dealer of the product on Saipan), and Tropical Printing Press (a commercial printer).

In Dec. 2, 2005, Malvar, accompanied by his mother, received his Bagong Bayani Outstanding Employee award from no less than Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at Malacanang Palace.

He immediately dedicated the award to his parents and even presented the crystal globe trophy and gold medal he won as a Christmas gift to them. He said without his parents and them teaching him the value of hard work, he wouldn't have attained all the success he has had the past 50 years of his life.



Melvin Malvar and the rest of the 2005 Bagong Bayani awardees join Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during the awards presentation last Dec. 2 at the Malacanang Palace in Manila.

NOT

FROM PAGE 1

Since 2001, Malvar has also been serving as editor of Bayani, a quarterly newsletter published by the Bayani Association of Saipan that serves as a medium for the Filipino community to get their opinions and concerns across to the local government and the Philippine Consulate.

Bayani Association has also been involved in worthwhile activities, namely providing scholarships to deserving but financially challenged students in the Philippines and donating money for the construction of

classrooms in the country.

Despite his busy schedule, Malvar has also found time to volunteer for NAMFREL during the absentee voting for the 2004 Philippine National Elections.

An active sportsman, Malvar is also part of numerous bowling championship teams and plays regularly in tournaments organized by the Philippine Bowling Association, Saipan Bowling Association, and American Bowling Congress.

After two stints on Saipan spanning close to a dozen years, Malvar said he feels right at home in his adopted homeland.

"Saipan is very much like the Philippines. There are a lot

of Filipinos here. And unlike the Philippines it is less stressing because of its slow pace. There's also no traffic. The environment is also OK and the air is still fresh," he said. "All in all, I have no regrets coming here to Saipan and I'm still exploring different experiences and still continuously learning here."

Malvar and his wife Lourdes have two sons: Michael Ryan, the eldest, finished ECE at St. Louis University in Baguio City and works at a call center in Manila, and the youngest, Mark Oliver, finished Computer Engineering at AMA Computer College and runs the family's computer shop business.



Philippine Department of Public Works Secretary Hermogenes E. Ebdane Jr. poses with guests and members after delivering the Masons' grand master's address during the installation of the officers of Emon Lodge No. 179 of Masonic District No. 54 under the Jurisdiction of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines last Saturday at World Resort Hotel's Royal Taga.

RP Cabinet member enchanted with Saipan scenery, beaches

By **FERDIE DELA TORRE**
REPORTER

Philippine Department of Public Works Secretary Hermogenes E. Ebdane Jr. was all praises with the beauty of Saipan, particularly the beaches.

"It's my first time [here on Saipan]. You have such a beautiful scenery," Ebdane told the Saipan Tribune as he viewed the beach from the club room on the eighth floor of the Fiesta Resort and Spa in Garapan last Saturday morning.

Upon his arrival at the Saipan international airport, the Philippine Cabinet member was accompanied by Philippine Consul General Wilfredo DL. Maximo and officers of the island's Masons to Fiesta Resort and Spa where he was set to pay a courtesy call on Gov. Benigno R. Fitial and Lt. Gov. Timothy P. Villagomez.

Ebdane lauded the CNMI government and the people for "maintaining the pristine beaches."

"It is also very peaceful," said the DPW secretary.

He visited the island to serve as the

keynote speaker during the installation of officers for this year's Emon Lodge No. 179 of Masonic District No. 54 under the Jurisdiction of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines.

Ebdane is a retired four-star general who is the grand master of Masons in Philippine jurisdiction. Before coming to Saipan he attended the installation of officers for Masons in Guam.

He said he is also happy to learn that there are many Filipinos here and that they are very active in community activities.

Coup rumors

On the issue of reported impending coup d'etat against the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the retired general expressed doubts about it.

"There is no critical issue that may ignite soldiers and police officers to overthrow the administration. There is lack of armed component to launch a coup," Ebdane said.

Citing surveys, he pointed out that Filipinos do not support extra-constitutional means to topple the Arroyo administration.

Nevertheless, Ebdane said the administration is prepared for any uprising.

Asked whether Arroyo could finish her term despite the election cheating scandal and corruption issues hounding her presidency, the DPW secretary was quick to reply, "Definitely."

Under the Philippine Constitution, Arroyo is mandated to complete her term until 2010, he said.

The Cabinet official also noted that the Philippine economy has been improving and that the situation is expected to get better with the recent implementation of the 12-percent increase in Value Added Taxes.

With respect to DPW major projects, Ebdane mentioned many ongoing and forthcoming projects such as construction of major highways, roads, bridges,

school buildings, among other things.

He said that, of the 10 top priority programs of Arroyo, six are DPW-related projects.

Ebdane avoided answering, however, the issue that he was allegedly one of the trusted Arroyo men who tried to help election official Virgilio Garcilano exit the country at the height of the "Hello Garci controversy."

He said the right person to talk about the allegations is Garcilano himself.

"Less talk, less mistake," he said.

Asked whether he has plans to enter politics after his stint at DPW, Ebdane said he is not a politician.

"I don't know the inner workings of politics," he said, adding that he may instead enjoy his retirement and go farming in his native Zambales.

He is happily married to former Alma Cabanayan, who accompanied him in this trip. The couple is blessed with three children.

Ebdane's previous significant assignments include being provincial commander of the Nueva Ecija Constabulary Command; commander of the Presidential Guard Battalion; commanding officer of the PC Special Action Force; director of the Western Police District; regional director of the National Capital Region Police Office; and chief of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force. He served as chief of the National Police in 2002 to 2004.



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PNB Foreign Exchange's raffle draw winners asked to claim prizes

The five lucky winners of PNB Foreign Exchange's 2005 Christmas Raffle Draw are reminded to claim their prizes at the remittance company's Susupe office.

The lucky patrons were drawn early last month.

Fifth prize winner was Fely Almogela, who won a brand new cellular phone, while 4th prize winner Noel Cadalina bagged a turbo broiler. Merlita Navisaga won a DVD player and second prize winner Mellany Dar won a brand new Microwave Oven. First prize went to Maira Apacible, who brings home a brand new 21" television set.

The winners are requested to bring identification documents when claiming their prizes.

PNB Foreign Exchange holds the raffle promo yearly to show its

gratitude toward its customers, who continuously patronize and trust their service through the years.

PNB Foreign Exchange launched in October last year its innovative remittance service that now allows PNB account holders in the Philippines to receive money from their family members in the CNMI in just five seconds.

Branch manager Con Pobre earlier said the new system, called the Integrated Remittance System, was installed and specialists flew in from Manila to oversee the implementation of the project last year.

"This IRS is an online system where a remittance is transmitted simultaneously to a PNB account. This would assure OFW's [overseas Filipino workers on] Saipan of a faster, if not the fastest, means of sending money back to their beneficiaries in the Philippines," Pobre said.

Even better, the remittance can be withdrawn from any of PNB's broad network of 324 branches across the archipelago.

"The process is made most convenient for OFW beneficiaries," Pobre said.

PNB has the largest remittance network in the world with 97 overseas branches. "The bank's recent award as the Best Commercial Bank of the Year for the highest reported OFW remittance, is an attestation to its worldwide OFW acceptance," Pobre said.

"Early remitters happily viewed their remittances which only took five seconds to be credited to their beneficiaries' accounts," said Pobre.

Besides this new Rapid Remit service, PNB still offers premium services on its Payment at PNB Counters, Door-to-Door Remittance Delivery and Credit to Other Banks. *(Marconi Calindas)*

LABOR FRONT

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
REPORTER

Q: Are guest workers permitted to go anywhere and perform any activity they wish after work hours?

A: Alien workers may go anywhere and perform any legal activity they wish during their off-hours. But they are not allowed to work for another employer or start a business venture. The regular working hours are stated in the employment contract.

Q: Are employers allowed to charge their housemaids or farmers for food and housing expenses?

A: Employees being paid less than the minimum wage of \$3.05, including housemaids and farmers, cannot be charged for food and housing. No deduction may be made for housing, food, or any

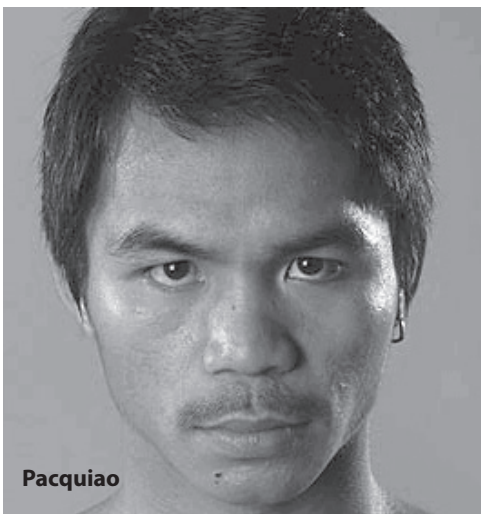
other expenses unless it is provided in the employment contract approved by the Labor director.

Q: Does Labor collect filing fee from any complaint workers?

A: Labor collects \$20 filing fee for labor complaint. But complaining workers may request for a waiver of such fee if they qualify as an indigent and they are unable to pay.

This section seeks to provide answers to questions related to CNMI labor and immigration. The Saipan Tribune presents the questions to the Department of Labor and the Division of Immigration. Anyone wishing to submit a question may e-mail them to editor@saipantribune.com, or you may leave a message at 235-6397 local 133. You may also visit the Saipan Tribune offices on the second floor of the Century Insurance building on Beach Road, in Garapan.

Pacquiao-Morales rematch set in September



Pacquiao

By **GIL C. CABACUNGAN JR.**
INQ7.NET GMA7

Filipino boxing hero Manny "Pacman" Pacquiao Thursday confirmed to GMA News that he will be fighting Mexican Erik "El Terrible" Morales again in September.

This will be their third encounter after Pacquiao stopped Morales via a crushing 10th round knockout on Jan. 22 at the Thomas and Mack Center in Las Vegas, Nevada.

According to sports analyst Quinto Henson, he has talked to Pacquiao publicist Ricardo Jimenez who also confirmed that Morales is determined to avenge his defeat to Pacquiao, and avail of the rematch clause in a contract the two fighters signed at Top Rank.

But Pacquiao said that before his scheduled rematch with Morales in September, he might fight another boxer in June.

The Pacquiao-Morales rematch may be held in Las Vegas again, the report on GMA Network's "Saksi" news program said.

Japan grants citizenship to sisters born in RP before WWII

TOKYO (AP)—A family court has granted Japanese citizenship to two sisters who had been stateless since their births to a Japanese father and a Filipino mother in the Philippines before World War II, a report said Thursday.

Kyodo News agency reported that Kazuko Idebata, 82, and Sanae Idebata, 77, will be registered as Japanese citizens, citing lawyer Hiroyuki Kawai.

The decision by the Tokyo Family Court is the first time a Japanese court has granted citizenship to children born to Japanese emigrants in the Philippines who were left in the country during the chaotic wartime period, Kyodo said, citing supporters of the sisters.

The sisters are living in the Philippines and are unlikely to move to Japan, but the ruling will allow their children and grandchildren to live and work in Japan, Kyodo said.

"My prayer has been answered. I'm sharing my delight with all family members," Kyodo quoted Sanae as saying at her home in Mindanao.

The family court and the lawyer's office were closed late Thursday.

The sisters' father moved to the Philippines and married their mother in 1922, Kyodo said.

The father later returned to Japan and died in 1945, while the mother passed away in 1953, it said.

The sisters had been stateless because the parents failed to report their marriage to the authorities, it said.

Kyodo said eight other people in similar situations applied to the court in October seeking Japanese citizenship.

About 2,500 Japanese-Filipino children were left in the Philippines after the war, it said.

RP film products find overseas markets

By **MARINEL CRUZ**
INQUIRER

Actors Richard Gutierrez and Angel Locsin will be speaking in Bahasa Indonesia when the Philippines' hit fantaserye "Mulawin" from GMA 7 premieres on an Indonesian channel in March, according to a GMA Network executive.

"Mulawin," the TV series that launched the love team of Richard (Aguiluz) and Angel (Alwina) in 2004, would be dubbed in Bahasa, the dominant language, and aired on TV 7 or Pt. Duta Visual Nusantara Tivi Tujuh, said Darlene Dimaano, assistant vice president for syndication.

"This is a breakthrough. We've wanted to penetrate the Indonesian market for two years now," Dimaano told Inquirer Entertainment in a phone interview on Tuesday. "The program was edited to fit 82 episodes, one hour each. No time slot has been picked."

GMA 7's executive vice president and chief operating officer Jimmy Duavit and TV 7 president Lanny Raahardja inked the deal in June 2005, about the same time GMA 7 and Cambodia's Channel 9 (Cambodia Television Network) linked up for the same TV show, Dimaano noted.

"The program was dubbed in Khmer and aired in Cambodia last September," she said. "We're working on syndicating other programs like 'Encantadia,' but nothing has been finalized so far."

Meanwhile, Tony Matoto, who represented presidential consultant for entertainment Vic del Rosario on a trade mission to India last month said he is hopeful that the trip "sent a strong signal that we are serious in our intention to work with India."

Former President Fidel V. Ramos led a 25-member team that visited the subcontinent from Jan. 15 to 21 to attend "Partnership Summit 2006" in Calcutta.

Del Rosario is also the executive producer of Viva Entertainment Inc. Matoto is Del Rosario's chief of staff and head of Viva Entertainment's film archiving department.

In an earlier interview, Del Rosario pointed out that there is a big Indian market for Pinoy films and TV shows.

"We may be able to generate demand



Actor Richard Gutierrez in a promotional photo of the Philippines' hit fantasy series "Mulawin" from GMA 7.

for Filipino films there if we promote them properly. We are targeting the Mumbai market, which is used to watching foreign movies," said Matoto. "We are also looking into the possibility of co-producing Indian films there and/or Filipino movies here."

Mumbai, Matoto added, is the center of Bollywood, the world's largest film industry, which produces twice the annual film input of Hollywood in the United States.

Matoto added: "The companies we spoke with asked us to send screeners (films recorded in VCDs and DVDs). They want to find out if they can mar-

ket our products there."

At the Calcutta summit, Matoto said Ramos "introduced Pinoy films as Jollywood."

"With our movies introduced as Jollywood, we are hoping to have our own branding, our own identity. When you hear Jollywood, you'd know it's from the Philippines," he explained.

Matoto clarified: "While acknowledging that Jollywood is not of the same level with Bollywood and Hollywood in terms of output, it aspires to be within the top 10 films in the world. Ramos emphasized quality not quantity in films."

PINOYSTYLE

Face to face with Jennifer Aniston



By JANET SUSAN R. NEPALES
INQUIRER

Editor's Note: Published on page A2-1 of the February 3, 2006 issue of the Philippine Daily Inquirer

LOS ANGELES—Jennifer Aniston is one tough cookie.

The first time we met her a few years ago, Jen was still married to Brad Pitt and very much in love. She came across as a down-to-earth, no-nonsense girl you could hang out and be friends with. She wasn't feeling well at the time (she was nursing a flu) but she exuded warmth, sincerity and a thoroughly wholesome personality.

Today, Jennifer, 36, is in the thick of a media spree that involves her now ex-hubby Brad and a pregnant Angelina Jolie. After several months of keeping their relationship low key, Brad, 42, and Angelina, 30, finally announced they were expecting their first child. The whole world was shocked—including Jennifer.

Jen was reportedly alone in her Hollywood house when news that the Brangelina baby was due in May broke. For those who are doing their math, Angelina was pregnant before the divorce of Brad and Jen was finalized last October. In a Vanity Fair interview, Jennifer admitted that she wanted to start her own family, going as far as to declare, "There's a man wandering the streets right now who's [going to be] the father of my children."

Could it be her new beau, actor Vince Vaughn, from whom she says she is getting moral support?

Ironically, Jennifer just did a movie, "Derailed," where she portrays "the other woman."

This time around, we met Jennifer at The Ritz Carlton Huntington Hotel and Spa. She arrived in a striking black pinstriped pantsuit, blonde hair

cascading down her shoulders. She was calm, cool, relaxed and smiling—this was one month before the announcement of the Brangelina baby.

In "Derailed," the lead characters are cheating on their spouses. How important is fidelity in a marriage? Or should it be accepted as just being "modern" to have an open marriage?

Well (laughter), I am not personally up for swinging but I think, you know, to each his own. There are people who have open marriages and they think that is okay. I personally am not interested in that. I think fidelity is important in a marriage.

Are there other things just as important?

Trust, honesty and friendship.

You have a line in the movie that goes, "You can't appreciate someone until they are gone." Are there people in your life you did not appreciate?

Sure. I would say that as a kid, you do not always appreciate maybe your elders all the time, like your grandmother. I wish I'd spent more time with my grandmother when I was a kid... and it wasn't that I didn't appreciate her, I was just... a kid. But I loved her. She was one of the strongest women I have ever known. Like, we had a fun relationship when we were together but I did not make that extra effort, you know.

What made you accept this role?

I was hesitant at first but I always wanted to do a thriller. I love a good thriller.

Did you like your character?

I like [the fact] that she was flawed. I think she was trapped in a situation that she really could not get out of.

Why do you think somebody like Clive's character would be attracted to your character and leave a beautiful wife?

I don't know. I think that's just life. I think that is what is sort of harsh about it. Life is not easy. Life does not make sense sometimes. You can have everything wonderful in the world and you just make stupid choices, you know, because you are bored for a moment or you are not fulfilled for a moment.

Your character obviously has a very dark side—did you see that?

Not really. I mean, I do not look at it as a dark side. Or, I do not think she looks at herself as a dark person, you know. It's like... a villain does not think he is villainous.

Lately, you have been on the cover of most magazines. How has the past year been to you?

It has been the best of times and the worst of times. It has been a tough year but I wouldn't change a thing. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

How do you feel that everyone thinks of you as his or her best friend?

It is nice that everyone thinks that they know me even if they do not. People have been very supportive. I think that is very nice.

Do you always date just actors?

No, it can be anybody as long as he is not crazy. He does not have to be famous. I would go out with a normal guy.

How do you relax?

I do yoga two or three times a week. It keeps my body strong and makes me feel, eat and function better. I try to relax also by being with my friends. I am very easy going. I like to be in my home. I like to watch mov-

ies or just get in the car and go on a road trip.

Any regrets from the past year?

I did not have to do anything I did not want to do this past year. It was all good. I did not have to put on an act. My friends made me laugh. I made myself laugh. I have a very small group of friends and I usually speak to three or four for advice. I collect the data and then figure out what to do.

How do you make decisions?

I follow my heart, follow my instincts. Every time I strayed from my instincts, I went down a bad road.

What makes you happy?

A sunset makes me happy, a bottle of wine and nice cheese. And, of course, love makes me happy. Simple things make me happy.

What are your hopes for 2006?

To be happy. To follow my heart, to follow my instincts. To continue to figure things out, find a place, have great friends and have a family of my own.

Do you still believe in marriage?

Sure, why not.

Rethinking a small space

By PINKY CRUZ
INQUIRER NEWS SERVICE

A small space requires big thinking. Lately I've been given more and more assignments to design a less and lesser area. A person's creativity thrives and is quite challenged in the limitations posed by his environment. A big part of the struggle for some is not really the lack of room but a confining mindset that has been used to formulas.

I've discovered five limitations, what I call the Five Don'ts, which we must let go so our creative juices can flow in our designs.

1. Do not use tiny furniture. In an intimate space where relaxation is the main theme, go for compactness and scale. Get over your fear of its littleness. Concentrate more on filling every corner with a comfy seating, a nook so inviting to laze around. Continuity is a good element here. Divert your senses by the intimacy the whole setting creates and you will produce something very livable.

2. Do not compensate by using a lot of contrasting colors. Be discreet in your choices. A simple monochromatic palette will bring wonders in expanding it. Seek to limit your accent hues in small doses, say in painting or your throw pillows.

3. Do not over-accessorize. Restrain your urge to decorate. Proportion is very crucial in your use of wall decor and table settings. Go more for few-stuff but big-scaled functional art pieces. In a small space, less is always more.

4. Do not buy anything without considering the essentials: Is it the right size? How flexible is it? "What other use can this table serve?" On sturdiness, "Can this piece withstand the wear and tear of constant use?"

5. Do not underestimate lighting. I have never been more satisfied with a whole ensemble without the subtle touch of lighting. It does not only give more depth to a box of a room, but it gives a whole character to the room. Be creative, though, in what kind of light to use and where to put it.

When your mind has been cleared of all these misconceptions for designing a small space, it is set to soar for new, greater ideas.

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT!

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HIDDEN SECRETS OF THE PHILIPPINES

The Calamian Islands

The main attraction of Coron is the enchantingly situated seven lakes, famous of which is the nationally acclaimed cleanest lake in the Philippines, the Kayangan Lake. It also has number of islands with white beaches. This is a view of the Kayangan Lake.



Approximately 275 kilometers southwest of Manila, in a peaceful corner of northern Palawan, lie the Calamian Islands. This sparsely populated group of islands, fringed with palm trees and white sand beaches, is one of the Philippines' best kept secrets.

The Calamian Islands are dominated by the three largest islands of Coron, Busuanga and Culion. At the heart of these islands is Coron Bay—the site of a major battle between Japanese and American forces during World War II. On the 24th September 1944, a large group of American Hellcat fighters and Helldiver bombers sank 25 ships of the Imperial Japanese Navy. As a result, the bay is now one of the best places in the world for wreck diving. Aside from the wrecks, scuba divers can expect to see a brilliant array of coral and an abundance of sea life: turtles, dolphins, barracuda, and even rare sea cows (known by the locals as “dugongs”) all live in the waters around these islands.

Culion island consists of gently-rolling hills surrounded by white sandy beaches, and the stunning turquoise water is home to several pearl farms. The beaches around Culion look like the setting of a Robinson Crusoe adventure, and are the ideal place for rest and relaxation.

Busuanga island is home to some of the Philippines' most endangered species, including the Calamian deer, and is also the location of a safari-style zoo. At the center of the island is Yulo King Ranch (the only operational airport in the Calamians), and to the north is Club Paradise—a luxu-

rious island resort that can only be accessed by boat. The island is also the home of the Maquinit Hot Springs, which are believed to have powerful healing properties due to the rich mineral content of the water.

Coron island contrasts sharply with the other neighboring islands because it is made of steep limestone cliffs and deep, freshwater lakes. The island is almost completely uninhabited, and is home to only a handful of tribal people called ‘tagbanuas’ who have been there for countless generations.

This secret tropical paradise is only visited by a small number of people each year. One of the best ways to explore the tranquil islands is onboard the M/V *Lagoon Explorer*—a 10-cabin catamaran that cruises around Coron Bay between the months of October and June. The ship operates four-day, three-night cruises that depart from Coron Town every Monday and Thursday. Guests are given the chance to experience the beauty of nature in total comfort, with a friendly crew and excellent food. The cruise is accessible via regular flights between Yulo King Ranch and Manila.

To find out more about the *Lagoon Explorer* or to make a booking, you can visit the Discovery Cruises website: www.LagoonExplorer.com. Alternatively, contact Blue Horizons Travel & Tours in Manila for more information. Telephone +(63-2) 848-3901, fax +(63-2) 848-3909 or email info@bluehorizons.com.ph for assistance. (Alex Stutely)

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



A view of one of the cabins inside the M/V *Lagoon Explorer*.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



The M/V *Lagoon Explorer* is a 10-cabin catamaran that cruises around Coron Bay between the months of October and June.

OPINYON

Credible alternative

I agree with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) that we should have a credible alternative before we excise Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. But a credible alternative doesn't have to be a person, it can be a process. That isn't a novel idea, that was the case in Edsa People Power II. If the alternative in Edsa II had been Arroyo, Edsa II would never have happened. Arroyo was widely distrusted even then, having balked at fighting Joseph Estrada until it was safe to do. Then she presented herself as the opposite of Estrada. As it turned out, not without prophetic irony, she would be the opposite of Estrada in the extent to which she would cling to power. In all else, she would be the likeness of Ferdinand Marcos.

That is the reason I disagreed with Cory when she said she regretted delivering such spawn as Arroyo, birthing her in Edsa II. I myself do not regret taking part in Edsa II. I believed in Edsa II; I still do. That was a necessary deed, that was a noble deed. What Cory (and Dinky Soliman and Bill Luz) should regret is not Edsa II, it is helping someone who had shown herself to be so hungry for power she would steal the elections to have it. I had no problems recognizing Arroyo as my President after Edsa II. However much I criticized her, I owed her my taxes as my President. I have every problem recognizing Arroyo as my President after the 2004 elections. After that, I owed her only my scorn.

I submit the following perfectly credible alternative in response to the CBCP's call. This alternative has three parts:

First, end an illegitimate rule. That is not conditional on any alternative, credible or not. Where there is a crime, there must be punishment. Without that, there is no justice; without that, there is no government. Getting back your cell phone from a thief who stole it is not conditional on your proving you have a credible alternative use for it. The current government is itself an incredible alternative to the democratic norm, which is an

elected government. It is the product of a coup, wrought by fraud instead of fear, wrought by gangsters instead of mutineers.

How to end that rule? I myself continue to favor People Power and civil disobedience over anything else. I join the bishops in eschewing violence. But I do not see how anyone can be bound by purely constitutional means to end a purely unconstitutional government. I do know one thing, which is that you cannot end that rule by trying to embarrass its wielders. The devil himself may quote the Scriptures to suit his purposes, and liars themselves may quote truth to serve their purposes. I'm not surprised that Arroyo, Mike Defensor,

Second, hold elections as soon as possible. To repeat, hold elections only after Arroyo is gone, not before. She cannot be part of the elections, she is the whole of the problem. The logic is simple and inescapable: The voters were robbed of their vote, the voters should get back their vote. Like I said, the "who" is the easiest to answer: The one who should govern is the one the people vote for.

What this means is that any transitional or caretaker council may not exist beyond a few



There's The Rub

By CONRADO DE QUIROS
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

go very far reform-wise would do well to recollect Churchill's words: Democracy is a wretched system; it's just that all others are worse.

Third, establish a Truth Commission. I submit though that in lieu of the kind of Truth Commission Alfonsín created in Argentina and Mandela in South Africa after the rule of

the generals and apartheid respectively, we establish a Truth Commission that will investigate not the torture wrought by the ousted regime but the lies it perpetrated. I suggest a Truth Commission in its most literal sense, one that would ferret out the truth and punish the liars.

At the very least that is so because the order of lies that has been unleashed upon the country is not the kind that merely hurts it, it is the kind that destroys it. The day we accept the "Hello, Garci" tape (whose complete authenticity was proved beyond a shadow of doubt by Arroyo herself, when she called up Manny Pacquiao to say "Hello, Manny"—truly God plays tricks on this country!) as "a lapse in judgment" is the day we stop being a country. We have no reason to exist, we have reason only to subsist, by foraging in distant lands. That would be the true lapse in judgment, one that history will punish severely.

At the very most, that is so because we need to stem the tide of deceit and dishonesty that is turning this country into a country of thieves. We need a Truth Commission not only to see the truth about our tyrants, we need it to see the truth about ourselves. We need a Truth Commission not only to see the truth about what our leaders have done to us, we need it to see the truth about what we have become. The Truth shall set you free: Never has that Biblical injunction sounded truer.

Truth is always a credible alternative to lie.

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Ignacio Bunye and Virgilio Garcillano agree with the bishops that truth must be pursued relentlessly. Arroyo was the one who promised she would not run again; Bunye was the one who produced the "Hello, Garci" tape and blamed it on others; Defensor was the one who kidnapped Ping Lacson's witness against Jose Pidal and called it a rescue; and Garci, well, you have an embarrassment of riches there. Liars will lie even about lying.

months, it may exist only for the purpose of preparing for elections. I personally think no more than six months. An unelected council that exists beyond that will not usher in reforms, it will usher in tyranny. All that council has to do is line up the current election commissioners in the Rizal Park, metaphorically speaking, and computerize canvassing. And fly in international observers to observe the elections. Those who say that doesn't

Are we in a 'coup trap'?

To those in the military who think that they have or are the answer to the Filipino people's prayers for a better life; to those "activists" who do not worry that these military elements are threatening to overthrow the government, but even seem to encourage or welcome such noises and moves; to those politicians or businessmen who are financing their activities: please take a reality check.

The first thing to consider is that the Filipino people, whom you seem to be so anxious to help and defend, are not at all looking forward to that kind of help and defense. This is not an assertion based on anecdotal evidence or personal experience. Surveys from both Pulse Asia and the Social Weather Stations show this conclusively: the great majority of Filipinos don't want to be under any form of military rule—they are fully aware of the flaws of a democracy, but they would rather stick with it, thank you.

In their preference for democracy, Filipinos find themselves in good company, as with Winston Churchill, who almost 60 years ago made this statement: "We accept in the fullest sense of the word the settled and persistent will of the people. All this idea of a group of supermen and super-planners, such as we see before us, 'playing the angel,' as the French call it, and making the masses of the people do what they think is

good for them, without any check or correction, is a violation of democracy. Many forms of government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time; but there is the broad feeling in our country that the people should rule, continuously rule, and that public opinion, expressed by all constitutional means, should shape, guide, and control the actions of ministers who are their servants and not their masters."

Secondly, you, pro-coup groups, must try to get away from the time warp you seem to have gotten into. Hello? While you are toying actively with the idea of mounting a coup that will give you the power you want (in the guise of saving the Filipino people, naturally), please note that the rest of the whole world is moving away from the "culture of the coup."

And, as in the first consideration, the world does have a reason for distancing itself from coups. An excellent source of information on this issue is Benjamin M. Friedman's "The Moral Consequences of Economic Growth," in which he makes a strong case for economic growth creating an environment favorable to



By SOLITA COLLAS-MONSOD
INQUIRER

his case, he brings out a wealth of data that should be very instructive to all of us.

Start with the finding that experience around the world shows that poor economic performance (e.g., falling per capita incomes) provides a fertile environment for coups; the study showing that the probability of a country's undergoing a coup depends on both the level and recent growth of its average income. Or, to put it another way, he cites a study showing that each doubling of per capita income reduces the probability of a country's experiencing a successful military coup by 40 percent to 70 percent (depending on the region of the world—in Asia it seems to be 50 percent).

African countries that experienced coups saw their per capita incomes decline by 2.6 percent in the years when the coup occurred, while the decline was only 0.8 percent in countries undergoing legitimate major changes; the rise was by 1.9 percent in years when there were no major changes. In Asia, where coups are more unusual because incomes rarely fall, the average per capita income growth in coup countries is one percent, which is far superior to the African

democracy, tolerance and solidarity (and thus should be encouraged worldwide), while stagnation does the reverse. In the course of laying out

situation, but very low compared to the average Asian per capita income growth.

So what's the problem if poor economic performance goads potential saviors to come out of their barracks and take over? Maybe they can do better, after all.

Unfortunately, that does not seem to have been the historical experience. What is more likely to happen is that the country gets into a "coup trap"—which goes something like this: falling incomes invite coups, which generate political instability, which in turn generates poor economic performance and falling incomes, which invite coups.

A more graphic (and cynical) analysis—not in Friedman—could be that the incoming coup leaders, i.e., the new government, might engage in predation to vanquish their opponents, which creates incentives for asset holders to support rival groups. These groups must engage in predation in order to force the incumbent government from power and, later, for them to stay in power, then the economy takes the hit. Uneasy lies the head that wrests a crown.

The effects of a "coup trap"? Just look at Ghana, which experienced its first military coup in 1966, to overthrow the corrupt Kwame Nkrumah. In the 15 years that followed, it had five successive military governments. Income per capita in Ghana has risen by only 0.4 percent a year since 1975. Just look at Fiji, whose succession of coups has resulted in lower human development vis-à-vis other Pacific nations. So much for saving the people.

But then—could it be that we are already in a coup trap, Philippine style? God forbid.

Many forms of government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise.

SAMU'T SARI



The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration held a graduation ceremony on Jan. 28 for some 85 Filipino nonresident workers in the CNMI who recently finished their Culinary and Food Processing training course. The graduation ceremony was held at the Hibiscus Hall of the Fiesta Resort and Spa Saipan. The following are pictures taken during the event.



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